

COMMITTEE REPORT

COMMITTEE: Development & Planning (D&P)

CHAIRPERSON: Diane Gallagher, Chairman

DATE/TIME: April 27, 2021 @ 5:39 p.m.

PRESENT:

☒ Diane Gallagher

☒ John Schultz

☒ Bill Bingham

☒ Staci Duerr

☒ Bob Heuerman

☒ John Lang

☐ Vacant

☐ Darcy Wild

A quorum was established.

Other Board members: None

Others: Brandon Behlke, Emily Legel, Hendrica Regez, Dan Reimer, Scott Toot and Eric Tison

1. Approval of Minutes

- a) Review and approve minutes for the March 23, 2021 Development & Planning Committee meeting – There were no minutes included in the packet to approve.

2. Citizens' Comments – None

3. Unfinished Business

- a) Discussion and possible action on Scope of Services for Comprehensive Plan RFP to be requested from possible plan consultants – Eric Tison – Diane Gallagher commented that this is a process that we talked about looking at especially when COVID allows people to come together. Eric Tison commented that at this time he feels the committee needs from him a Scope of Services to go over. His only hesitancy at this time would be how the process gets executed. The nature of this process is typically very visual and he would have some reservations for the time being if people can't get together in larger groups on a regular basis, certainly safely, while progress is being made. There is another item on the agenda a little later that looks like it is taking a somewhat similar path and he is very curious to see how that plays out with Blackhawk Hills Regional Council. Tison can continue to revise and update the scope of services, but executing the comprehensive plan update with the appropriate volume of public input and visual representation has him a little concerned. Gallagher added that our goal was because the comprehensive plan was created before the zoning ordinance and was meant to be a guiding force we may want to take a little bit more time in the greenways & trails plan or any other plans that are updated.
- b) Galena Library program on "What Jo Daviess County does and how to get involved" – Diane Gallagher commented that this was a result of programs that were initiated as part of the Earth Day Celebrations. Hendrica Regez had offered to do a video program that would be recorded on YouTube and we were really excited about it, but our excitement was a little bit early because the library wanted to focus on more environmental issues. They did one on owls that was just marvelous. This program gave us an opportunity to think about how we might reach out to the public and how we might create civic involvement by encouraging people to get active in the county and know how it works. Having presentations or recordings would be our way to market the county and accept input from the public. Hendrica Regez commented that she is still excited to do the program in May. Her daughter, who is an editor, is here and has offered her services for free. Gallagher added that this would also work well as an orientation for new County Board members or new committee members.
- c) Discussion and possible action on financing an informational table during the July 31 Galena Chamber Business Showcase – Diane Gallagher informed the committee that the Galena Chamber has an all-day event on July 31 at Ashton Hill Farm wedding venue that is a combination of educational programs and networking tables at different businesses. The fee is \$250.00 for a table. Gallagher is requesting that we support a request to the Finance Committee and the County Board for up to \$250.00. **John Schultz made a motion to**

finance up to \$250.00 for an informational table during the July 31 Galena Chamber Business Showcase from the County Board budget line item 913 events. Seconded by Staci Duerr and motion passed following a roll call vote resulting in all ayes.

4. New Business

- a) Discussion and possible action on Housing Needs Assessment Study with Blackhawk Hills Regional Council – Emily Legel proposed a project that she has been working on with Blackhawk Hills Regional Council for the past six months or so. They have noticed with COVID how home sales have gone through the roof. We are now experiencing a home shortage. Housing is a perennial concern of public officials and major employers. This issue was acknowledged in the 2019-2024 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy for Northwest Illinois. Particular concerns are availability, affordability and age. The total cost of this study will be approximately \$22,000.00 with the goal of closing the knowledge gap. Which is explained in the handout. BHRC issued an RFP to address workforce housing quality of life concerns in late 2020. They received 12 proposals. Five consultant were selected for interviews. Interviews were concluded the end of February. They hope to have a study with qualitative and quantitative data. Legel explained the anticipated benefits as outlined in the handout. Legel asked the committee to contribute \$1,000.00 towards the study. Her organization is contributing \$2,500.00 and BHRC is able to match up to \$10,000 per county. Eric Tison added that there could be some very solid data coming out of this study that could prove to be very helpful not only for what Legel does but for what Tison needs to do who is in contact with home builders on a regular basis. **John Schultz made a motion to contribute \$1,000.00 towards a Housing Needs Assessment Study with Blackhawk Hills Regional Council to be paid from Economic Development Fund line item 702 professional services. Seconded by John Lang and motion passed following a roll call vote resulting in all ayes.**

5. Staff Reports

a) **Building & Zoning**

1. Monthly Report– Eric Tison, Planning & Development Administrator, reported his office did not permit any new homes in March. There are new home projects in the works with a couple of builders so that will change. March was the dividing line last year. We are holding steady compared to last year. April is the beginning of construction season and things took off. It will be curious to see how things roll out here in the next few months. Building material prices are sky high right now. That doesn't appear to be slowing things down or stopping people. It comes down to will materials continue to be available, what is the additional cost and are people willing to pay that. Tison provided a list of zoning cases heard to date for the Committee's information. At the March meeting there was a variance request for a potential Guest Accommodations license on a property that was extensively reviewed and denied. Draft minutes from that meeting were also included in the packet.

b) **Economic Development**

1. NW Illinois Economic Development Monthly Report – Emily Legel, NW Illinois Economic Development Executive Director, reviewed her report that was included in the informational packet. Not included in the report is the Annual Meeting scheduled for Wednesday, September 29th at 6:00 p.m. at Eagle Ridge. Manufacturing Day and a golf outing are also planned for October. Diane Gallagher commented that she failed to put an item on the agenda regarding the rail study. Emily Legel added that this rail study is led by the East Central Iowa Council of Governments and Blackhawk Hills Regional Council. They have hired Quando Consulting out of Chicago to do the feasibility study to see what it would take to get Amtrak or a similar rail service from Chicago to Dubuque. They are looking at three different routes. They have had their initial kick off meeting. Hendrica Regez shared that they have asked us to meet for a presentation about a possible station in Warren which would be in addition to Galena.

- c) **Ad Hoc Economic Development Committee** – Diane Gallagher commented that the Ad-Hoc Economic Development Committee met last night. Gallagher asked John Schultz to give an update. Schultz shared a communication from the manager of a business in China that

wants to relocate to the LRA that is on the Army Depot and is asking for our support in this venture. They also made a couple of proposals. When a building or business is abandoned for a year or longer it reverts back to whatever zone it was in which is usually agricultural. They are proposing to change that from 12 months to 60 months so that there is a longer period of time for some other business to come in and take over that spot. Also if you have a piece of undeveloped property you cannot build a garage on it before you build your house. You can build an accessory building to store equipment to maintain that property. They are suggesting that the person be allowed to build an accessory building on a piece of undeveloped property prior to building a house and use it to store other things other than just to maintain the property. Eric Tison advised on the zoning text amendment process.

d) **LRA Board**

1. Update on LRA/Port Authority Discussions – Diane Gallagher read a report that was provided by Ron Smith, he advised that the LRA Board will be applying for grant funds to update the existing infrastructure.
6. **Citizens' Comments** – Dan Reimer advised that Jo Daviess County sales tax is up 20.7% in January 2021 versus January 2020. Reimer also advised on the employment/unemployment numbers for Jo Daviess County.
7. **Board Member Concerns** – Bill Bingham reported that there will be an Open House at the Old Train Depot on May 6, 2021 from 4:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. Tickets are available online.

The next regular Development & Planning Committee meeting will be Tuesday, May 25, 2021 at 5:30 p.m.

The meeting adjourned at 7:09 p.m. following a motion made by Bob Heuerman and seconded by John Schultz. Motion passed following a roll call vote resulting in all ayes.